

The University of Alberta Department of Music presents:

MUSIC AT CONVOCAATION HALL



The Kilburn Memorial Concert Series

presents

Ilya Kaler, violin

Saturday, February 5, 2011 at 8:00 pm

Convocation Hall, Old Arts Building



DEPARTMENT OF
MUSIC
UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

The Kilburn Memorial Concert Series presents
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Programme

Chaconne in g minor for violin and piano (1911)

T. A Vitali - F. David - L. Charlier

Sonata No. 3 in d minor for violin and piano, Op. 108 (1888)

J. Brahms (1833-1897)

I. *Allegro*

II. *Adagio*

III. *Un poco presto e con sentimento*

IV. *Presto agitato*

Intermission

Sonata in E-flat for violin and piano, Op. 11 No. 1 (1918)

P. Hindemith (1895-1963)

I. *Frisch*

II. *Im Zeitmass eines langsamen, feierlichen Tanzes*

Sonata No. 2 in a minor for violin solo "Obsession," Op. 27 (1923)

E. Ysaÿe (1858-1931)

I. *Obsession; Prelude*

II. *Malinconia*

III. *Danse des ombres; Sarabande*

IV. *Les Furies*

"La Campanella" from Concerto No. 2 in B minor, Op. 7 (1826)

N. Paganini (1782-1840)

Programme Notes

T. A Vitali - F. David - L. Charlier, *Chaconne in g minor* (1911)

The chaconne - a set of variations over a repeated (usually 4-note descending) bass pattern - first appeared in Spain around 1600. Evidence of a *ciaccona* originally written by Bologna-born violinist Tomaso Antonio Vitali (1663-1745), or by his father, Giovanni Battista (1632-1692) remains unclear; in its current form, the Vitali Ciaccona stands as a 1867 virtuoso "in the style of" pastiche by German violinist Ferdinand David (1810-1873), extensively revised in 1911 by French violinist Léopold Charlier. David was a close friend and collaborator of Felix Mendelssohn, who actively sought to revive audiences' interest in the music of J. S. Bach (whose celebrated chaconne for unaccompanied violin shares similarities with this one). The work typically explores a succession of rhythmic motives, techniques, dynamics, and key areas.

J. Brahms (1833-1897), *Violin Sonata No. 3 in d minor, Op. 108* (1886-1888)

Composed between 1886 and 1888 in the area of Lake Thun, Switzerland, this late sonata was premiered in Budapest in 1888 with violinist Jenő Hubay and the composer at the piano. The work was dedicated to a close friend, well-known conductor Hans von Bülow.

The sonata opens in d minor, a key traditionally associated with nobility, melancholy and passion. The expansive first theme of the *Allegro* presents long melodic arches and sighing figures over quietly anguished syncopations and repeated notes. The second main theme, also passionate, rises in the relative key of F major. The motives and accompaniment figures are brought gradually together in stretches of development of some complexity; long sections of 'bariolage' – waving string crossings, develop a characteristic pedal of the dominant tone (A, an open string for the violin). The 'organicity' of Brahms' compositional style is evident throughout, with a process of constant variation of the material, careful contrapuntal treatment of motives, and clear architectural lines. A restatement of the opening theme leads to a second development (episode in f-sharp minor), announced by a loud, majestic, rising arpeggio. The coda of the first movement brings back the opening theme, winding down through imitation, gradually reaching a serene resolution in D major.

The following *Adagio*, in lied form, continues in D major, gentler and lyrical, suggesting at times the graceful waltz (in 3/8) with its sophisticated variations. The melody touches on the Lydian mode, and grows to noble heights with the introduction of double-stops in the violin's high register. The ensuing expansive return of the melody and a varied repetition of the Lydian episode provide balance to the form.

Keeping with the tradition of the scherzo as a contrasting movement within the larger sonata, the composer offers a shorter and more lively movement, entitled *Un poco presto e con sentimento* - with a characteristic display of humour (however, keeping in a romantic, nostalgic, and somewhat uneasy vein, in f-sharp minor). The piano first presents the main theme, based on repetition of a 'heart beat' rhythmic figure (perhaps symbolic of Brahms' own romantic hesitations?) with the violin accompanying.

Roles are soon reversed and a development of the initial idea (apparently, an augmented version of the main motive) leads to gypsy-like outbursts and a sequence of exuberant chords, followed by a cadenza-like transition where tergiversation between minor and major recalls the initial moods. A shimmering coda to this short movement features the composer's daring use of fleeting chromatic octave displacements in the piano.

The *Presto agitato* powerfully brings back the initial key of d minor and concludes this serious and quasi-symphonic work. The large strokes of the initial theme are accompanied by a fast, obsessive 6/8 running figure, in the manner of the popular tarantella (typical of last movements by Beethoven, Mendelssohn, and others). This second sonata-form demonstrates further concern for contrast and development: the second main theme takes the more poised allure of a chorale, while motives are constantly recycled and transformed through the development parts. In one of those elaborations, the composer introduces a demonstration of fugal writing (on the first tune, contrastingly sparse, soft, and dark) as a means to gradually bring back the strongest possible statement of recapitulation. The listener taking a summary view of all four movements will have experienced the rich transformations of basic motives that emphasize the main pitches and intervals of the d/D triad, and in particular a 'fundamental motive' based on the skip of a fourth followed by a second in the opposite direction (D-A-B, A-D-C, or, alternatively ordered, F-D-C)

P. Hindemith (1895-1963), *Violin Sonata in E-flat, Op. 11, No. 1* (1918)

The two first violin sonatas, from 1918 (Op. 11 No. 1 and 2), are "the first of Hindemith's work to show an individual style" (*Skelton*). The Op. 11 was intended to only feature the violin, though Hindemith soon departed from the original plan and introduced the viola (viola sonatas op. 11 No. 4 and No. 5, from 1919), an instrument that he later adopted as his own, after having been mostly active as a violinist and concertmaster in Frankfurt. Hindemith was part of the Rebner string quartet from 1914 (as second violinist, and later as violist), and in 1921 founded the Amar Quartet (as violist), extensively touring in Europe. As a composer, he was also expanding his profile, with some of his pieces heard in 1922 at the International Society for Contemporary Music Festival in Salzburg. The following year, he was also an organizer of the Donaueschingen Festival, where he championed works by several avant-garde composers, including Anton Webern and Arnold Schoenberg.

Hindemith's early works are marked by a fluid key structure, more typical of free atonality. Of the Op. 11 wrote in Sept. 1918, to Frau Ronnefeldt:

"The day before yesterday I completed the first movement of a sonatina for violin and piano. The last movement I am working on now, but I haven't yet got the middle movement. The piece will sound very *al fresco*, with great thick and widely sweeping brush strokes... I want to compose a whole series of such sonatinas - or rather small sonatas, since they are too expansive for sonatinas; each of them to be completely different from the preceding ones - also in form. I want to see whether I can't, in a whole series of such pieces, increase the expressive personalities (which are not very great in this type of music and this combination) and extend the horizon."

The form of the first movement (*Frisch*) is palindromic, formed of large sections coming back later, as in a mirror. The heroic beginning is based on an augmented chord E-flat-G-B, while the second section focuses on stepwise motions.

The second movement (*Im Zeitmass eines langsamen, feierlichen Tanzes*) is also somewhat centered on E-flat, and features an ostinato funeral-like figure with muted violin.

E. Ysaÿe (1858-1931), *Sonata 'Obsession' Op. 27 No. 2 (1923)*

The second of Eugène Ysaÿe's six unaccompanied sonatas was dedicated to a dear friend and protégé, French violinist Jacques Thibaud (1880-1953). As one of the last and most innovative violinists-composers, Ysaÿe gradually turned to conducting and composition after years of public success as a touring virtuoso. Regarded as 'the emperor of violinists' by Fritz Kreisler and a whole generation of younger artists, Ysaÿe was inspired by his younger colleagues as well, paying them tribute through these sonatas (for example, recalling the memorable playing styles of Kreisler, Szigeti, Quiroga, etc. and even quoting some of their own works). The theme of collegial friendship also inspired his Op. 26, a duet for two violins titled 'Amitié'.

'Obsession' stands for an obsession with death, and with two musical ideas in particular: the first-quoted beginning of the "Preludio" of Bach's Partita No. 3 in E major, which apparently obsessed Thibaud as well as Ysaÿe, and the "Dies Irae" ('day of wrath') melody issued from the traditional Requiem ('Mass of the Dead'), notably featured in the celebrated 'Symphonie Fantastique' by Hector Berlioz. In its various guises, and inspired by Bach's acrobatic textures and the open sonorities of the music from the Middle Ages, the Dies Irae melody is set in counterpoint with itself and successively evokes fear, discord, mystery, anger.

The title '*Malinconia*' (Melancholy) suggests one of the medieval 'humors' traditionally believed to command the human psyche. With a more veiled sound (using the mute), the violin presents a duet-like contrapuntal elaboration in the style of the siciliano, an old dance. The eerie conclusion of this movement consists of the Dies Irae melody played in its original form, as plainchant, in long, stoic, unmeasured notes.

'*Danse des ombres* (Dance of the Shadows)', combines another old dance, the sarabande, and a theme derived from the Dies Irae, treated in variation. The presentation of the theme in pizzicato (plucked strings) first suggests ancient string instruments, such as the lute or the guitar. Following virtuosic elaborations, the theme returns in large bowed chords.

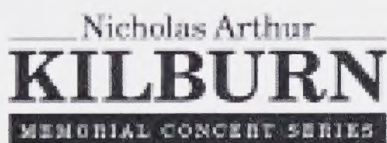
'*Les Furies - Allegro furioso*', again focuses on the Dies Irae melody, with an abundance of open sonorities, stunning effects of timbre, dissonance and dynamic contrast. The stormy interjections and symphonic cascades of sounds are all evocative of the 'Furies', mythological Roman creatures representing the angry and vengeful spirits of the dead.

N. Paganini (1782-1840) “*La Campanella*”, from the *2nd Violin Concerto*, in *B minor*, *Op. 7* (1826)

This tuneful and ingenious rondo takes its name from the violin’s near-perfect imitation of the handbell (‘campanella’) in the form of repeated high-pitch harmonics (‘glass tones’). It features a near-comprehensive demonstration of the great Italian virtuoso’s reckless innovations with the violin, from rapid shifts and arpeggios, thrown bows, string crossings, acrobatic double-stops, trills, double harmonics, left-hand pizzicati, chromatic slides, etc. Beyond the formidable glitter, the composer admirably captures the capricious spirit of dance, set in the urgent key of B minor, and articulates clear points of contrast from one episode to the next (alternatively mocking not only the handbell, but also the flutes, the trombones, and other instruments).

Program notes by G. Tardif

Today’s concert is kindly supported by:



Described by London's Gramophone as a 'magician, bewitching our ears', **Ilya Kaler** is one of the most outstanding personalities of the violin today. Among his many awards include 1st Prizes and Gold Medals at the Tchaikovsky (1986), the Sibelius (1985) and the Paganini (1981) Competitions.

Ilya Kaler was born in Moscow, Russia into a family of musicians. Major teachers at the Moscow Central Music School and the Moscow Conservatory included Zinaida Gilels, Leonid Kogan, Victor Tretyakov and Abram Shtern.

Mr Kaler has earned rave reviews for solo appearances with distinguished orchestras throughout the world, which included the Leningrad, Moscow and Dresden Philharmonic Orchestras, the Montreal Symphony, the Danish and Berlin Radio Orchestras, Detroit Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, Seattle Symphony, New Japan Philharmonic, the Moscow and Zurich Chamber Orchestras, among others. His solo recitals have taken him throughout the former Soviet Union, the United States, East Asia, Europe, Latin America, South Africa and Israel.

His recordings of the Paganini Caprices have been deemed by American Record Guide to be 'in a class by themselves' combining 'the perfection, passion, and phrase sculpting of Michael Rabin with the energy, excitement, and immediacy of Jascha Heifetz.' Other highly acclaimed recordings include Sonatas by Schumann and Brahms, Concertos by Paganini, Shostakovich, Tchaikovsky, Brahms, Schumann, Dvořák, Glazunov, as well as Taneyev Suite, Bach Sonatas and Partitas, to name a few.

The Washington Post lauds him as, 'a consummate musician, in total control at all times, with a peerless mastery of his violin.'

An active chamber musician, Mr Kaler has appeared at many major music festivals throughout the US and Europe with many of the most prominent musicians of our time. Mr Kaler's orchestral career includes guest Concertmaster appearances with San Francisco Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra and Baltimore Symphony, as well as regular tours with the World Orchestra for Peace under the direction of Valery Gergiev. He has also held a position of a concertmaster of the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, NY, for 5 years.

One of the most sought-after teachers in the world, Ilya Kaler has served as a Professor of Violin at Indiana University School of Music in Bloomington, IN, Eastman School of Music in Rochester, NY, and is Professor of Violin at DePaul University School of Music in Chicago, IL. Mr Kaler performs on a 'Sennhauser' Giuseppe Guarnerius del Gesu violin, 1735, on generous loan from the Stradivari Society of Chicago. He lives with his wife Olga and two sons Daniel and Ariel in Wilmette, IL.

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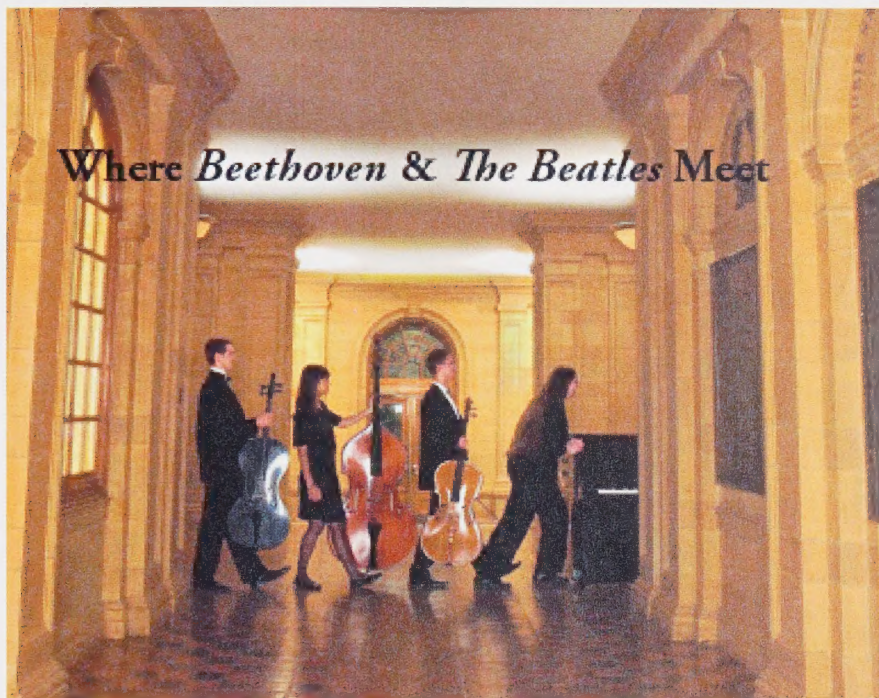
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